



News Release
For Immediate Release

Witt Associates hired to review State Fair preparedness and response

INDIANAPOLIS (August 18, 2011) – The nationally recognized public safety and crisis management firm Witt Associates has been hired to assist the Indiana State Fair Commission’s investigation of the tragedy at the Indiana State Fair on Aug. 13.

Governor Daniels contacted James Lee Witt, chief executive officer of Witt Associates, today to hire Witt’s company to conduct a comprehensive, independent analysis of the state fair’s preparedness and response to Saturday night’s event. Witt Associates, with headquarters in Washington, D.C., will complete an investigation and provide a report to the Fair Commission and the governor on all aspects of the adequacy of state fair procedures and the effectiveness of decision-making during and after the event as well as the response to the accident.

“With Thornton Tomasetti conducting the structural investigation and Witt Associates reviewing decision-making and preparedness, we believe we have the best people in America looking at every angle of the accident,” said Andre Lacy, chairman of the Indiana State Fair Commission.

Witt was the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for President Bill Clinton from 1993 to 2001 and has served as the chief executive officer of the International Code Council, a building safety association that develops codes for construction for various types of buildings. Witt Associates specializes in response and preparedness services, including after-action evaluation and analyses, event and effort documentation, and assessment of emergency operations procedures. The company has been brought in by local and state governments and other entities across the country to conduct independent investigations after disasters. For example, the company performed an independent review of a fatal fire in a Chicago skyscraper in 2003 that killed six government employees, and the company advised the state of Louisiana about its overall response and recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

The governor also requested that the state’s Inspector General assign several investigators to the State Fair Commission to assist with fact finding and documentation. That effort started on Wednesday.

Witt Associates will have staff on site at the state fair beginning Friday. More information about the company may be found at www.wittassociates.com.

Earlier this week, the State Fair Commission announced it would engage Thornton Tomasetti, a New York engineering company, to coordinate and conduct the structural portion of the investigation. Thornton Tomasetti has been at the accident site since Tuesday.

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